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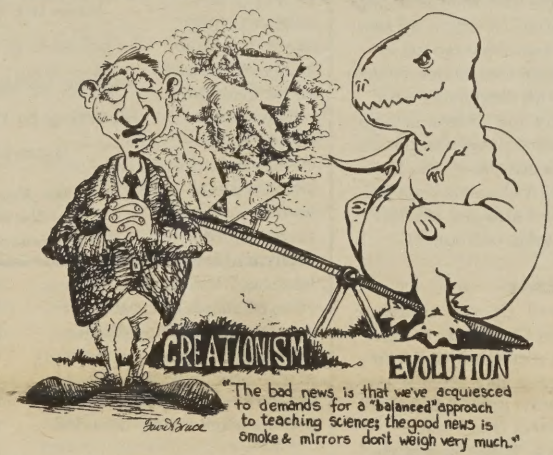
Freedom Watch

Citizens Project

Evolution Under Fire


CREATIONISM
EVOLUTION
"The bad news is that we've acquiesced to demands for a "balanced" approach to teaching science; the good news is smoke & mirrors don't weigh very much."

"The teaching of evolution in your school system seems to be in serious trouble," explained Dr. Joe Levine, author of a widely used high school biology textbook. His comment came after discovering that biology teachers at Rampart High School (Air Academy District 20) were skipping the chapters dealing with evolution in his textbook, *Biology*. He continued: "A teacher's decision to excise evolution chapters rather than other, less important material shows either a serious deficit in professional judgment or a hidden, non-scientific motive."

This "non-scientific motive" identified by Dr. Levine is a renewed interest in undermining the teaching of evolution in public schools. In Colorado Springs, the events at Rampart, other challenges in public education and recent letters to the editor suggest that even 70 years after the Tennessee Scopes "Monkey Trial," challenges from creationists are back with a vengeance.

"The National Academy of Science states unequivocally that the tenets of 'creation science' are not supported by scientific evidence."

The origins of "scientific creationism"

Although there's a spectrum of individuals who might be viewed as "creationists," the most strident tend to be biblical literalists. They range in philosophy from "flat earth creationists" to "new earth creationists" or "old earth creationists."

Most argue that the world and all lifeforms were created suddenly over a literal six day period. Further, they deny that any sort of evolution occurred, insisting that humans share no common ancestry with other animals. Of these groups, most are "new earth creationists," believing that the world is only about 6,000 years old (arrived at by calculating ancestry from the Bible).

During the 1960's the term "creation science" was adopted to facilitate introducing creationism into public school science classes, largely through the efforts of Henry Morris and Duane Gish, co-founders of the Institute for Creation Research (ICR) in El Cajon, California. Self-identified "scientists" applying to this organization must sign a statement of belief in the literal inerrancy of the Bible.

This makes ICR "probably the only scientific group in the world where everyone states beforehand that they already

[Continued on Page 2]

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Creationism in the Springs

"At least one teacher openly taught creationism in life science class. Another teacher is afraid to teach evolution because of the flack he would take. I've actually had other teachers tell me I must teach religious creationism with evolution," explains a teacher who left District 20's Challenger Middle School in Colorado Springs. The problem? "It was like the Inquisition for teachers who taught evolution."

"At least one teacher openly taught creationism in life science class. Another teacher is afraid to teach evolution because of the flack he would take. I've actually had other teachers tell me I must teach religious creationism with evolution."

Media attention – local and national – highlights how education issues here have become increasingly complex, most notably the topics of sex education and the origin of the human race.

Locally, the issue of evolution has drawn attention from California's Institute for Creation Research through their "Back to Genesis" seminar hosted at Village Seven Presbyterian Church, plus a local week-long conference sponsored by Summit Ministries in Manitou Springs. The message: demonstrate a link between teaching evolution and moral decline.

This message has made Colorado Springs a sudden focal point in the creationist debate. The visibility of our community in this issue has been heightened by the presence of ministries like Focus on the Family, which routinely criticizes evolution; and Master Books, which publishes creationists texts. Our visibility may reach a new high if the Institute for Creation Research pursues relocation to Colorado Springs.

Perhaps not coincidentally, the Colorado Springs' organization Biological Science Curriculum Studies (BSCS) hosted a week-long seminar on evolution, featuring nationally recognized speakers like Dr. Eugenie Scott, director of the National Center for Science Education, and world-renowned Harvard paleontologist Dr. Stephen Jay Gould.

"A lot of the teachers are afraid to teach evolution. They just need moral support," remarked Dr. Scott while visiting Colorado Springs. "Creationists give the false choice of religion versus evolution. The issue is not the Bible versus science, but biblical literalists versus everyone else." She quotes Pope John Paul II, who observed, "The Bible does not wish to teach how the heavens were made, but how one goes to heaven."

In a climate with so much tension, why not let educators teach what they want? "That

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News Briefs

Focus leads boycott

Focus on the Family is in the forefront of a new boycott against the French drug firm that manufactures RU-486, a drug that Focus is concerned might be used to assist abortions. Because the French firm does not market in the United States, Focus is targeting this firm's U.S. subsidiaries, although none of them actually markets RU-486. In announcing the boycott, Focus joined forces with the National Right to Life Committee, the Southern Baptist Convention's Christian Life Commission, Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition, Concerned Women for America, and Focus' former affiliate, the Family Research Council.

Diversity on the Right

The Christian Right, which has such difficulties with the concept of diversity, exhibits considerable diversity of its own. According to a recent New York Times nationwide poll, individuals who identify themselves as Christian Right were split almost equally between Republicans and Democrats (although most voted for George Bush in the 1992 presidential election). Further, only half considered themselves to be evangelical, fundamentalist or charismatic in their religious beliefs. In addition, their educational backgrounds showed roughly the same diversity as other Americans. Among the factors that distinguish these religious right individuals, the poll found, were considerably more conservatism on social issues (particularly on abortion and homosexuality) than shown by most other Americans and even by most other Republicans.

Vail charter school promotes creationism

The recently-formed Eagle County Charter Academy has leased space from Vail Bible Church. As part of the agreement for this space, the Charter Academy agreed with the church that the church's doctrine of creationism would be taught along with evolution. In spite of that agreement, school officials maintain, "there is a clear separation between church and state."

The position of the Eagle County Charter School has not yet been reconciled with the 1978 ruling of the U.S. Supreme Court, which prohibited teaching creationism in public schools as a promotion of religious dogma in violation of the Constitution's First Amendment.

Christian Coalition challenged

A coalition of mainline religious groups has formed the Interfaith Alliance, an educational and lobbying group to balance the influence of Christian Coalition, the leading organization of politically-active religious conservatives. According to Interfaith Alliance board members: "Our concern is that the radical right lays claim to the fact that they uniquely speak for people of faith in this country, in essence that 'God is on our side.' ...We're against spiritual intimidation."

AFA Project Spotlight debuts

Project Spotlight, the new anti-gay initiative by Mississippi-based American Family Association, debuted in Ohio. Local AFA members initiated a "register to vote" drive, in which all new voters are encouraged to sign a pledge not to vote for any pro-homosexual candidates. Project Spotlight plans to identify all candidates who have been endorsed by gay and lesbian groups, and then, two weeks before the election, send a list of those candidates to each voter who has signed the pledge. Ohio AFA chapters plan to use Project Spotlight to elect anti-gay officials and repeal local human rights ordinances.

Randall raps Republicans

Randall Terry, founder of Operation Rescue, recently called on all good Christians to leave the Republican Party. It's a cultural civil war out there, says Terry: on one side are the few who follow biblical morality, and on the other side are the many who reject God's law. While the Democrats are a "haunt of jackals," Republicans have shown "betrayal and cowardice," have "no solid first principles," and are a roadblock to "righteous political reform." Which political party still sides with God? The U.S. Taxpayers Party, says Terry. **CP**

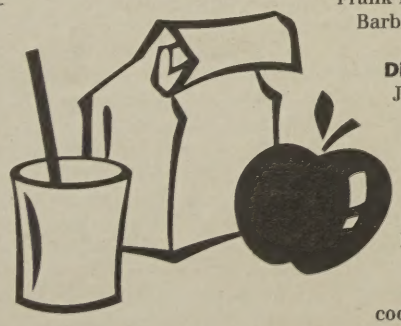
Eye On Schools

Air Academy District 20

The committees reviewing sex education in the district will be making their recommendations beginning September 1. Public forums discussing these recommendations will take place throughout the month of September. Call the district at 598-2566 for more information.

Schools Network

The Citizens Project Schools Network is off and running! This network provides you with the communication you need to stay informed about the issues and activities within your school district. The network already has volunteer coordinators in Districts 11 (Colorado Springs), 12 (Cheyenne Mountain), 20 (Air Academy), and 38 (Lewis Palmer); these coordinators will soon contact those who live in these districts and have expressed interest in this network. If you would like to be in touch with other concerned parents and teachers and have not yet joined the network, please contact the appropriate district coordinators.



District 11
Frank Mosher, 635-4623
Barbara Toney, 594-6748

District 12
Julie Willis, 630-1466

District 20
Mike Fisher, 528-6920

District 38
Rita DeRuntz, 481-8488

The network still needs coordinators in the following districts: Harrison District 2, Fountain/Ft. Carson District 8, Manitou Springs District 12, Falcon District 49 and Re-2 District Woodland Park. If you are interested, contact Pat Tolle at the office, 520-9899. **CP**

Evolution Under Fire
[Continued from Page 1]

have all of the answers," observes Dr. Joe McInerney of the Biological Science Curriculum Studies in Colorado Springs.

Challenging Educators

Locally, the Institute for Creation Research has urged parents and students to challenge the teaching of evolution in their public schools. Last September, ICR brought its "Back to Genesis" program to Village Seven Presbyterian Church, where attendees were encouraged to openly defy teachers regarding all scientific evidence presented for evolution.

> **"Science is restricted to the natural world. As soon as you introduce the supernatural, you are outside of science. Creation 'science' is an illegitimate basis for theory because it cannot explain things without resorting to the supernatural."**
>
> *— Dr. Eugenie Scott, National Center for Science Education*

The seminar described "how evolution facilitates abortion, homosexuality, racism, pornography and lawlessness." The seminar also covered standard creationist arguments – principally the "missing link" and the antiquity of the earth. "I was appalled at the paranoia," reported a local biology teacher who attended.

Reality check

Is creationism a science and does it deserve "equal time" in public school science classes? According to the National Academy of Science, true science requires the reality check of observation and testing, with a process for rejecting observably false ideas.

Dr. Eugenie Scott explains, "Science is restricted to the natural world. As soon as you introduce the supernatural, you are outside of science. Creation 'science' is an illegitimate basis for theory because it cannot explain things without resorting to the supernatural."

Creationists and their supporters repeatedly insist that Charles Darwin's predicted fossil "missing links" (also known as intermediary or transitional forms) have never been found. "Now, after more than 135 years of exhaustive research, the transitional forms still have not turned up. They don't exist in the geological record," wrote Focus on the Family's James Dobson in an April 1994 fund raising letter. Similar comments are a common feature of other creation advocates. If it's an unproven theory, the argument goes, it's no better than creationism.

Scientific institutions, however, see it differently. The National Academy of Science observes, "Hundreds of thousands of fossil organisms found in well-dated rock sequences represent a succession of forms through time and manifest many evolutionary transitions."

In terms of the age of the earth, most creationists hold to their view of a young earth of about 6,000 years. However, explains the National Academy of Science, "evidence that the evolution of the universe has taken place over at least several billion years is overwhelming."

Another theory championed by scientific creationists is "flood geology." This theory posits that all fossils and the miles-thick geologic deposits were created by the great flood described in Genesis. This curious supposition "defies all geological observations," according to the National Academy of Science.

Is scientific creationism really scientific? "The National Academy of Science states unequivocally that the tenets of 'creation science' are not supported by scientific evidence."

Anti-evolutionists also try to cast doubt on the acceptance of evolution by referring to evolution as "just another theory." However, the National Science Teachers Association emphasizes that "evolution is firmly established even as the roundness of the earth is firmly established."

Is evolution anti-religious?

Although major scientific institutions see creationism as bad science, the claims that evolution undermines religious values still pose a problem for educators.

Professional creationists are quick to blame social ills on the acceptance of evolution, describing it as both "atheistic" and "anti-religious."

Many religious leaders take a different view.

"I have no reason to object to evolution," says Rev. Jim White of the First Congregational Church in Colorado

Springs. "The meaning of the two Genesis creation stories is that God is the Creator. These stories were written in the cosmological theories of the times."

"I do not see evolution as anti-religious," agrees Rabbi Howard Hirsch of Temple Shalom. "The scriptures represent the best information of the time. Revelation is not a one-time event, but a continuing process. As we find out more and more, we adjust our understanding."

Ironically, some conservative evangelical Christians also see scientific creationism as being anti-religious. "Does it really advance the Christian cause to force the facts of nature to fit into a preconceived theory of the earth as is done by the creationist movement?" asks Calvin College Geology Professor Davis Young. "No. It harms our cause. Christ called us to truth and honesty, but we are not telling the truth if we insist that the facts of nature indicate that the earth is very young."

"Those who charge that the world is made up of two warring camps — those who believe and those who don't — risk creating a divisive sense of warfare."

The courts

Most people are aware of the 1925 Tennessee Scopes trial, but few are aware of the Arkansas "Scopes II" trial of 1982.

In 1981 the Arkansas governor signed Act 590, mandating that "public schools within this State shall give balanced treatment to creation-science and to evolution-science." This was challenged by both religious and scientific groups, and was tried before U.S. District Judge William Overton. After hearing scores of witnesses from both sides, Judge Overton concluded that "evolution is the cornerstone of modern biology" and that "creation science is simply not science."

Judge Overton further ruled that "evolution is not a religion," and that "creation-science is only a version of Genesis read literally, a partisan (and narrowly sectarian) religious view, barred from public school classrooms by the First Amendment."

Despite rulings like Overton's, challenges continue to plague individual schools and school districts. Recently, Colorado Springs has seen more and more of these tensions rise to the surface (see Creationism in the Springs, page 1).

Beyond the debate

The debate, no doubt, will continue despite court rulings and pronouncements from the scientific community. More important than these issues, however, is how the debate unfolds in our community.

Those who charge that the world is made up of two warring camps – those who believe and those who don't – risk creating a divisive sense of warfare.

The most dangerous tenets of creationism are those suggesting that the whole of our morality is dependent on how – specifically – we view our origins.

That's a false premise, suggests Rabbi Hirsch. "We read the Scriptures for values. Ultimately it's how you live your life that counts. We must have respect for other people. There is room for diversity. If people say 'only my truth is real,' then we are all in trouble." **CP**

Charlie Webb is a District 20 parent and a physician.

Creationism

[Continued from Page 1]

leaves room for a lot of mischief. I'm old-fashioned enough to believe there is an objective reality. Either Lee surrendered to Grant or Grant surrendered to Lee," responds Dr. Scott.

As the controversy grows, new terms enter the discussion. Phrases like "abrupt appearance theory" and "intelligent design theory" represent a repackaging of creationism. The most popular of this new wave of assaults against evolution is seen in a textbook entitled *Of Pandas and People*, a text praised by Focus on the Family as "an antidote for the bias and error of biology textbooks used in most schools."

"Every profession has a set of professional standards. Evolution is one of the half-dozen great ideas in the history of science. One cannot teach biology with integrity if they leave evolution out."

— Dr. Stephen Gould

"It's really awful science," notes Dr. Scott. "If it shows up in your public school, call me!"

More problematic than the teaching of a warmed-over creation theory is the deliberate omission of evolution entirely from high school biology classes. When a group of parents discovered that biology teachers at Rampart High School were omitting the chapters on evolution, parents and administrators quickly addressed the problem. Dr. Donna Nicholson, District 20's associate superintendent, was blunt in her response: "Evolution will be taught here."

Harvard's Dr. Stephen Gould suggests that such omissions are patently unprofessional, and emphasizes why evolution ought not be merely optional. "Every profession has a set of professional standards. Evolution is one of the half-dozen great ideas in the history of science. One cannot teach biology with integrity if they leave evolution out."

Given the situation in Colorado Springs, Dr. Eugenie Scott advises getting active locally. "Since creationists have lost at the federal level, they now seek to control school boards and teachers." (See Vail Charter School Promotes Creationism, page 2.) She concludes, "Things may look bad, but there's a basic decency in American people, and they tend to vote out extremists." **CP**

Legal Updates

Teaching the Bible in school

Two years ago, in a case that received considerable local publicity, five individuals sued the Woodland Park school district to force it to teach the Bible to students. Woodland Park schools, they said, teach Greek and Roman mythology, and consequently these schools should also teach the Bible. The plaintiffs further argued that instructing children about morality and good citizenship can only be accomplished by teaching them from the Bible.

The case did not fare well. After hearing considerable testimony, the El Paso District Court ruled that the suit was unfounded, dismissed the case, and awarded attorney fees to the school district. Undeterred, the plaintiffs appealed the case. The Colorado Court of Appeals recently affirmed that this "teach the Bible" case was indeed frivolous, and awarded additional attorney fees to the school district for this appeal.

Good Friday Holiday unconstitutional

An Illinois federal judge declared that the public school holiday for Good Friday is unconstitutional as a government endorsement favoring the Christian religion. To quote the judge: "Unlike Christmas and Thanksgiving, which have both secular and religious connotations, Good Friday remains a wholly religious day." Members of the American Jewish Congress hailed the decision as promoting religious liberty for all students.

Georgia Ten Commandments case

The U.S. Supreme Court recently refused to hear a case from Cobb County, Georgia, which had displayed the Ten Commandments and selected sayings of Jesus in the county courthouse. This Supreme Court action left standing the Court of Appeals decision prohibiting these displays as an unconstitutional endorsement of Christian religion. The Court of Appeals had indicated that the displays could remain if they were part of a larger and more diverse exhibit, but Cobb County officials refused to be inclusive of other religions.

Exhibiting cross found constitutional

In a decision favoring closer ties between church and state, the Sixth U.S. Court of Appeals held constitutional the display of a cross by the Ku Klux Klan on the Ohio Statehouse's public square in Columbus. According to the District Court's decision, a reasonable observer would not have perceived the Klan's cross next to the Statehouse as a governmental endorsement of religion.

Suing for money

The national and Colorado chapters of the Freedom From Religion Foundation have filed suit in federal District Court in Denver, asking that the words "In God We Trust" be removed from United States currency. Their complaint states that the motto, placed on U.S. coins and bills in 1956, violates the First Amendment to the Constitution by using the government to promote a God-based religion. **CP**

Freedom Watch Sponsors

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Announcements

Meet the candidates

The Colorado Springs Women's Political Caucus and the National Organization of Women will sponsor a **Meet the Candidates Night** on September 15 from 7-9 p.m. at the Freemont Room of the Antlers Doubletree Hotel. For more information, call Coll Ela Goetz at 578-9972.

Manitou group forms

Citizens Opposed to Gambling (COG) has formed to challenge any efforts to make gambling legal in Manitou Springs. Bumper stickers and more information are available by contacting them at 685-5296.

AIDS education

Kristine Gebby, former National AIDS Policy Coordinator, will be part of a day-long conference entitled **AIDS: Today, Tomorrow and Beyond 2000**. The conference, all day September 8, features informative talks by several health professionals about the AIDS epidemic. For more information, contact Marilyn at 633-1214. The conference is brought to you by the Colorado Nurses Association, the Southern Colorado AIDS Project, Full Community Services and Citizens Project. **CP**

Inside CP

Introducing...our new Executive Director

Citizens Project is delighted to welcome Bill Huddy as our new Executive Director. Bill joins us after a career in broadcast journalism as a reporter and anchor in Florida, Wisconsin and Colorado Springs (you may remember him from his days at KKTV Channel 11). Bill graduated with a double major in Mass Communications and International Relations from California State University.

And...Associate Director

Citizens Project is pleased to announce that Pat Tolle, a long-time coordinator on our steering committee, is our new Associate Director. Pat will continue her fine work as manager of the "unmanageable" and coordinator of the "uncoordinatable" and will be involved with schools issues, politics and media work.

Building Community

Ever notice how difficult it is to organize and lead progressive organizations? Fear not, help is on the way. This fall, Citizens Project will be offering workshops for organizations sharing our vision for the Pikes Peak Region. Topics such as individual differences, effective communication, motivating volunteers, diversity appreciation, team building and leadership development may be explored. We have professional facilitators ready and willing to work with your organization. Contact our office at 520-9899 to arrange for an evening or weekend workshop.

80906 Neighborhood Group

The 80906 Neighborhood Group meeting has been rescheduled for October 2, 5 p.m. at Julie Willis' house, 7 Winfield Avenue. Discussion topics include: District 12 School Board activities and information on the upcoming election. For more information, contact Julie at 630-1466.

Can you help?

We know you can. All we have to do is ask, right? Well, here it goes: we are looking for a desk and chair (preferably with wheels), a handheld vacuum with attachments for cleaning a computer, shelving units and any office supplies you think we may need. Call Pat at 520-9899 and let her know if you can help us out.

Three cheers for us!

The staff at Citizens Project was delighted at the turnout for our two candidate forums in August. Nearly three hundred people came to hear from candidates in contested party primaries. Our thanks to the media panelists and the candidates for giving the voters a chance to learn more about them. **CP**

Citizens Project

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Our Mission: Citizens Project is a grassroots organization in the Pikes Peak region dedicated to upholding the traditional American values of pluralism, freedom of religion and separation of church and state.

Yes, I would like to help support Citizens Project.
Enclosed is my contribution of:

Contributors of $15 or more will receive future issues of *Freedom Watch* and candidate surveys by mail, and will also receive special notices about Citizens Project activities.

☐ $15 ☐ $30 ☐ $50 ☐ $100 ☐ Other

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Sign me up for the **"Religion in the Classroom"** seminar on September 17.

Please reserve____space(s) at $10 each (Lunch included)

○ Vegetarian Lunch

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Available for suggested donations

○ "Celebrate Diversity" button – *50 cents*
○ "Celebrate Diversity, Create Community" mug – *$5*
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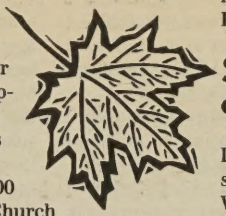
Thank you for your support. Please note contributions are tax deductible.

Citizens Project Fall Events

September 16 7PM

Religious Freedom and the Constitution

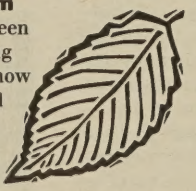
Religious freedom is strengthened by what Thomas Jefferson described as a "wall of separation" between church and state. Increasingly, this idea is being challenged. Join Steven Green, religion and constitutional scholar and the legal director for Americans United for Separation of Church and State, when he speaks on religious liberty and the Constitution. The talk is September 16, 7:00 p.m. at All Souls Unitarian Church located at 730 North Tejon.



September 17 10AM

Religion in the Classroom

What's the difference between teaching religion and teaching *about* religion? Historically, how has public education handled religious issues? What is the law and how does it apply to the public schools? While these are tough questions, Citizens Project hopes to clarify the issues and offer some guidelines during our one day seminar entitled **Religion in the Classroom: Law, History and Practical Guidelines**. Join us on Saturday, September 17, when we will provide the community with a solid foundation of information about this complex issue. For more information, contact Pat at 520-9899. To sign up, see coupon on this page.



September 21 9AM-5PM

Media Workshop for Nonprofits

Citizens Project and the Colorado Springs Independent are co-sponsoring an all-day media workshop for like-minded nonprofits facilitated by nationally-known media consultant Bob Schaeffer. The program will feature tips on effective press releases, how to plan effective media events for the entire year, and do's and don'ts when dealing with the press. If you think you might be interested, contact Mike Shaver at the Citizens Project office. Space is limited, so act quickly.

September 23 7PM

Celebrating the Right to Read

Citizens Project, along with the Pikes Peak Library District and the Smokebrush Center, is sponsoring an event to mark Banned Book Week. **From Seuss to Shakespeare: Celebrating the Right to Read** will feature free children's programming, excerpts from Shakespeare, and community leaders reading from a wide variety of challenged or banned books. Make plans now to join us September 23rd at the Smokebrush Center, 235 S. Nevada Avenue.

Upcoming October and November First Tuesdays

Elections are quickly approaching, and Citizens Project is planning public forums for the first Tuesday and Thursday of both October and November. On October 4 and 6, we'll meet and discuss issues with candidates for local and state office. November 1 and 3, we'll sponsor discussions about some of the initiatives appearing on the November ballot. Spokespeople on both sides of the issues will share their perspectives. The forums will provide opportunities to meet the candidates and ask questions of initiative proponents. All forums begin at 7 p.m. The forum on October 4 will be at Calvary United Methodist Church located at 4210 Austin Bluffs Parkway and the rest will take place in the Davis Auditorium in the downtown branch of Penrose Public Library, 20 North Cascade.